

EIS Comments on the proposed Action Plan for the Education Committee.

Introduction

The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) has engaged in consultative talks with Aberdeen City authorities to develop an action plan addressing the concerns of teachers regarding violence and aggression in schools. The EIS has welcomed the interim action plan focused on improving school policies and environments in Aberdeen City, particularly in areas such as incident reporting, staff training, behaviour management, and handling violence and aggression. However, the plan currently lacks full alignment with the broader recommendations provided by the EIS, necessitating further revisions.

Overview of EIS Recommendations

The EIS has proposed a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at equipping Aberdeen City Schools to effectively manage and mitigate incidents of violence and aggression. These recommendations include establishing clear definitions, developing robust policies, enhancing communication strategies, providing targeted staff training, allocating necessary resources, and conducting systematic reviews to ensure a safer school environment.

Current Action Plan Assessment

The current action plan has adopted several EIS-recommended strategies, such as revising behavioural policies, updating risk assessments, and enhancing staff training. Despite these efforts, there are significant deficiencies within the plan, particularly its failure to address the need for additional resources that would enable a more inclusive environment, as highlighted by teachers.

Working Document

The EIS considers the current Action Plan a preliminary step requiring continuous updates and reviews as it evolves. This includes setting a regular schedule for reviewing all policies related to violence and aggression and their effectiveness, as well as engaging with all stakeholders, including staff and trade unions, to ensure the policies remain relevant and effective.

Public Statements and Visibility

Understanding that national guidelines on the definition of violence and aggression are still being formulated, the EIS suggests that Aberdeen City Schools adopt a joint public statement affirming that violence and aggression will not be tolerated. Additionally, it recommends visibly posting signs communicating this policy within all school buildings.

No Additional Workload

The EIS emphasises that the workload associated with the necessary training and policy revisions should be integrated into the existing school improvement plans and covered within school Working Time Agreements and In Service Training days to prevent overburdening staff.

Increased Resource to Support Inclusion

There is broad agreement among teachers on the need for enhanced resources to truly support inclusive education. The current action plan primarily addresses the symptoms of violence and aggression rather than the root causes. The EIS and Aberdeen teachers strongly advocate for increased provision of resources, including more Pupil Support Assistants, counsellors, and direct specialist support in classrooms. These enhancements are crucial for managing classroom dynamics effectively and providing necessary support to students with complex needs.

Conclusion

While the current action plan has made important progress in enhancing the safety and well-being of staff and students in Aberdeen City schools, closer alignment with the EIS recommendations will significantly improve its effectiveness. By addressing the gaps identified in this report, the action plan will not only meet but potentially exceed the standards set by the EIS, thereby fostering a safer and more supportive school environment for all. This commitment is essential for building trust and ensuring the safety of the school community.